

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1 and 7 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, now read as follows:

1. (Currently amended) An image processing apparatus for forming a visible image on a recording medium conveyed by conveying means, based on an image data sent from an image formation controller, in a color image formation mode for forming a color image or a monochromatic image formation mode for forming a monochromatic image, said apparatus having:

a plurality of color component image forming units that form a color component image respectively corresponding to a color component including at least black;

a timing signal outputting part that outputs via a common signal line to said image formation controller, a timing signal for instructing ~~to start~~ a formation of a first color component image in said color differing depending on image formation mode or a formation of a black component image in said monochromatic image formation mode, forming modes, the timing signal being output ~~via a common signal line to said image formation controller~~;

wherein, when a monochromatic image is to be formed on a preceding recording medium and a color image is to be formed on a succeeding recording medium, said signal outputting means outputs said timing signal corresponding to the succeeding recording medium earlier than said timing signal corresponding to the preceding recording medium.

2. (Currently amended) An image processing apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said timing signal outputting ~~part~~ ~~parts~~ output said timing signal when a recording medium conveyed by the conveying means reaches a predetermined position differing in each of said image forming modes.

3. (Currently amended) An image processing apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said signal outputting ~~part~~ ~~parts~~ precedently output said timing signal corresponding to the succeeding recording medium when a sum of a length of the preceding recording medium in a conveying direction thereof and a distance between the preceding recording medium and the succeeding recording medium is short relative to a distance from said color component image forming unit corresponding to said first color when the color image is formed to said color component image forming unit for forming the monochromatic image.

4. (Previously presented) An image processing apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said conveying means, when it continuously conveys a plurality of recording mediums, controls a distance between the recording mediums so as to be constant irrespective of lengths of a conveyed recording mediums in the conveying direction thereof.

5. (Previously presented) An image processing apparatus according to Claim 1, further having a mode signal outputting part that outputs a mode signal indicative of an image forming mode corresponding to said timing signal.

6. (Previously presented) An image processing apparatus according to Claim 1, further having an image data receiving part that receives, in synchronism with said timing signal, image data corresponding to respective ones of said color component image forming means in a predetermined order in said color image formation mode, or image data corresponding to said black component image forming unit in said monochromatic image formation mode.

7. (Currently amended) A controlling method for an image processing apparatus for forming a visible image on a recording medium conveyed by conveying means, based on an image data sent from an image formation controller, in a color image formation mode for forming a color image or a monochromatic image formation mode for forming a monochromatic image, said apparatus having a plurality of color component image forming units that form a color component image respectively corresponding to a color component including at least black, said method, having a step of outputting, via a common signal line, a timing signal for instructing ~~the recording medium conveyed by said conveying means to start~~ a formation of a first color component image in said color differing on image formation mode or a formation of a black component image in said monochromatic image formation mode forming modes;

wherein, when a monochromatic image is to be formed on a preceding recording medium and a color image is to be formed on a succeeding recording medium, said step outputs said timing signal corresponding to said succeeding recording medium earlier than said timing signal corresponding to said preceding recording medium.